

St. Augustine writes that our hearts are restless until they rest in God. Sometimes we sense that we or others we know are trying all sorts of schemes to seek fulfillment rather than seeking God, whom we most need. People fill their lives with work, hobbies, worldly passions, addictions, and an overabundance of “stuff.” Yet we have the breath of God in us and are incomplete until we rest in God.

So why don't we automatically follow God from the moment of our birth, through adulthood, without ever seeking fulfillment in these other gods?

Peter, Andrew, John, and James all had what would seem to be good lives. They were fishermen, which in Capernaum would have been a lucrative occupation. Capernaum was on the northwest bank of Lake Tiberius. We know a great deal about Peter's life in Capernaum. He had a well-located home near the synagogue where he lived with a wife and their clan.

Dropping everything to follow Jesus would have meant these men gave up their lucrative careers, life with their families, and a comfortable roof over their heads to travel around the country in tents with Jesus. Yet, they did this immediately. Their souls were restless, and they knew when they saw Jesus that He was God. They followed Him and his commandment to fish for people, even though I doubt that they really knew all that meant when they accepted that call.

Accepting a call to follow Jesus and fish for people must have been a bit scary. After all, they were leaving something they knew for something they didn't know. They would have to trust God for every meal and their own safety. I imagine they wondered what they'd have to do to fish for people. Indeed, all but John were ultimately martyred in their quest to follow every commandment Jesus gave them. They fished for people.

James was so bold in telling others about Jesus that he became the first of the apostles to die. Herod Agrippa beheaded him in 44 AD; according to tradition, his body was taken to Spain. One of the first house churches was in Peter's home, and Peter was crucified upside-down in Rome because he refused to abandon the commandments of Jesus. Andrew spread the Gospel around the areas of the Black Sea, and Roman authorities crucified him on an X-shaped cross, according to tradition. John became a priest in the early church in Ephesus. Tradition says he was boiled in oil but survived. None of the four apostles could have foreseen where their radical following of Jesus would lead them. Yet, they all followed.

Most of us here are followers of Jesus. So we have, to some extent, answered a call to follow Jesus. In these weeks leading up to Lent, I invite us to reflect on whether we have truly given up our claims to every part of our lives to follow Jesus as these four did. I'm not saying we are all called to leave our jobs and families and walk around in the desert. But I am asking us to discern whether, as followers of Jesus, we would be willing to do that. Because following Jesus means being willing to give up anything that prevents us from doing what Jesus calls us to do.

In the Gospel reading today, the call is to be fishers of people. So, today's question is: are we willing to give up anything that prevents us from fishing for people?

Fishing for people really is evangelism. Often, we are afraid of the word evangelism because we think it means knocking on doors and berating people to find God in a certain way. But fishing for people is different. Fishing for people in today's world means sharing why your faith is important to you with others. It means being prepared to talk about what God has done for you, and even if we have hardships, God still has done a lot for us.

It also means inviting your friends to church with you. Let's look around us. If everyone brought one person, consider how the inside of our church would look. Consider how much more good we could do in our community if there were more of us. Consider that we'd not have to spend so much time balancing our church finances because if we brought people to church with us and showed them what Jesus means to us, they'd join us.

If we follow Jesus's call to fish for people, we may have to give up our fear of talking about God. We may have to move to a different pew because ours will be filled. We may have to risk being vulnerable to another person. Doing what God calls us to do sometimes costs us something, but, in the end, it helps our souls rest in God.

The next few weeks will have passages from the Sermon on the Mount, a blueprint for discipleship. I invite us to reflect on how our lives will change as we give up anything that gets in the way of following Jesus. I also invite us to reflect on how our answering the call will help to transform the world.

When female seals give birth to their pups, the experience of giving birth makes them so hungry that they temporarily abandon their pups so that they can eat. After they eat, they return to a different spot on the shore and call for their babies. The baby seal pup hears its mother's voice and, communicating through voices and scents, the baby travels until it can be with its mother again. From birth, the pup's sound and scent are engrained in the mother, and the mother's sound and scent are engrained in the pup.ⁱ

We are imprinted with a memory of God, and God is imprinted with a memory of us. We can't rest until we fully unite with God. Nor can other humans. Our call is to follow Jesus, no matter what. And, in following Jesus, we are called to bring others to find rest in Him, too.

ⁱ Nishioka, R. Y. (2010). [Pastoral Perspective on Matthew 4:12–23](#). In D. L. Bartlett & B. B. Taylor (Eds.), *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Year A* (Vol. 1, pp. 284–286). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.